

AMAA news



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Rev. John Ernest Merrill, Ph.D.
(See story on pages 2-6).

A Hero Among Armenians

by George Maranjanian

The term "hero" is used very loosely nowadays. An athlete who is paid a million or more dollars a year to exhibit his physical prowess is labeled a "hero" if he makes a fortuitous or skillful maneuver. A person may do absolutely nothing but be randomly selected as a hostage and immediately achieve the status of "hero". Even a person exhibiting anti-social behavior — such as a thief or even a murderer — is not immune to being hailed as a "hero" by some of his countrymen.

A moment or two of reflection, however, would lead us to expect more from a "hero" than simply demonstrating his god-given physical or mental prowess. A cornered soldier may fight fiercely for his life; he is not being heroic, but simply acting out his instinct for self-preservation. Heroism, it would seem, implies a choice — a choice to take action or not take action — in a situation where no blame would be assigned for not taking action. Also, the action taken would involve risking one's fortune, one's liberty, or even one's life.

This was the situation in which an American missionary, Rev. John Merrill, found himself in 1915 as the Turks unleashed their genocide against Armenians in Turkey. Rev. Merrill at that time was a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission, the predecessor of the current United Church Board for World Ministries. Rev. Merrill was the President of Central Turkey College in Aintab, a position he had accepted in 1905. Rev. Merrill earned a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1894 and graduated from Hartford Theological Seminary in 1896. Two years later he joined the Central Turkey Mission of the American Board. He applied himself unreservedly and with great skill, throughout his active missionary career of 38 years, to the task of communicating knowledge and training character. His wife, Isabelle Trowbridge, was the granddaughter of the great missionary linguist of Constantinople, Elias Riggs. Together they served the cause of Christian Education in the Middle East. After the massacres, Central Turkey College was transferred to Aleppo, Syria, where it was renamed Aleppo College. Rev. Merrill continued to administer the College until his retirement in 1937.

In 1955, five years before Rev. Merrill's death, alumni of Central Turkey College and Aleppo College gathered in New England to honor the man who, during their youth, had taught and inspired them. The scroll they presented to him contained the following tribute:



Rev. John Ernest Merrill, Ph.D.

To the Reverend John Ernest Merrill, Ph.D.

In Grateful Tribute to:

His tireless pursuit of truth, and his ability to inspire his students with the same passionate devotion;
His patient power of friendship, giving his undivided attention to every conversation, an encouraging listener as well as an inspiring councilor;
His courageous loyalty to every cause and every friend, no matter how bitter, or how insidious the threat;
His quiet smile, questioning every hasty conclusion, yet giving warm support to every timid step in the direction of truth, goodness, beauty;
His ability to see, and to help others to see, the unseen but eternal in the midst of the very visible and temporal things of life.

At Watertown, Massachusetts
 On Saturday, September 7, 1955

This is the man who in 1915 was serving as President of Central Turkey College in Aintab, whose student body was largely Armenian. As the genocide unfolded, Rev. Merrill was in a precarious position. To the Turks, helping an Ar-

menian was a capital crime. Rev. Merrill could not have been blamed if he had left his post and returned to the safety of the United States. Neither could he have been blamed if he had simply stood by and merely protested as Armenians around him were slaughtered and deported; to do any more would have put his own life at risk.

Rev. Merrill, however, did everything in his power to save Armenian lives, disregarding personal danger. He and his wife sheltered Armenians at the College, provided what money they could to the deportees and refugees and borrowed money — which they later repaid from their personal funds — to bribe Turkish officials. They were two individuals in a foreign land, facing the savagery of a government and its supporters bent on genocide. Their actions were truly heroic. Day after day, under horrible and dangerous conditions, they exerted every effort to save as many Armenians as their limited authority and resources permitted. Rev. Merrill did everything he could, disregarding his personal safety, because to him it was the right course — the Christian course — to take.

Dr. Merrill, by remaining at his post, was among the relatively few foreigners — mostly missionaries and embassy officials — who were in a position to give eyewitness accounts of Turkish atrocities against defenseless Armenians. He did so at considerable risk, as any reference to the massacres by telegram or letter — by even a foreigner — was considered by the Turkish authorities to be a serious offense. A few quotations from official documents illustrate Dr. Merrill's efforts:

"As Mr. Merrill says, the [Turkish Governor General of Aleppo] is not in a position to do anything to ameliorate the situation. Consequently, Mr. Merrill visited the German Consul, who, through the alliance of the Turks with the Germans, is permitted to telegraph in cipher while neutral countries are not allowed this privilege, consented to telegraph to the German Embassy in Constantinople, and ask that the American Embassy be informed of the existing situation. In this way, we hoped to be able to bring some pressure on the Ottoman government to desist from the terrible measures that are being carried out, and that will certainly wreck the Christian organizations in the places mentioned, besides cause untold suffering to a helpless and innocent people."

"[The Turkish government] took vengeance on the defenseless men and on women and children. I have not heard of a single instance of attempted defiance of the orders for deportation in all the Zeitoun region. A few soldiers are sufficient to escort a large company of refugees. On the contrary, women and children have marched for hours barefoot, and babies on their mother's backs have been crushed to death through the carelessness of the soldiers, children have been thrown into the Jihon river by their parents, and, it is reported, by soldiers; the inhabitants of Bertis have waited for the companies of refugees and robbed them as they came along, with-

out interference from the escorting soldiers, especially they have taken their animals; muleteers requisitioned to carry the loads of the refugees have been allowed by the escort to run away at night, leaving the loads with them and complaint to higher officials has brought further trouble on the people; animals and provisions have been sold at ruinous prices or the people have not been allowed to attempt to sell them, or they have found no buyers at any price, as their enemies expected to take them without money, as soon as their owners had left; men of wealth were driven away from their homes almost penniless, not allowed even to get ready money which they had in hiding. On the road down from Marash to Aintab in the last three or four weeks, the treatment of refugees in some instances has been pitiful and a number of the women have been outraged by the soldiers of the escort. One woman gave birth to a child in the field outside Aintab, and was compelled after two hours to mount a horse and move on. Word came back that both mother and child had died. Last week another woman gave birth to a child at the same place. A nurse from our hospital managed to get to her side to help her. The case was a hard one, with very profuse hemorrhage. The nurse managed to get word to Dr. Hamilton, our woman physician, to come down, but before she could arrive and before the third stage of labor had been completed, the woman and child were sent on. These both died during the day. In this party were six or seven other women expecting confinement. I will only mention the fact that women on foot are beaten with heavy sticks by soldiers."

"In Biredjik all the Gregorian Christians and about a third of the Protestant community are reported by reliable witness to have become Mohammedans and to have been accepted as such. The remainder of the Protestants will remain firm. The cause of this step was the fact that the methods in vogue at Diarbekir have been put into operation at Ourfa, and Biredjik being under the Ourfa Government, they fear that the same methods will be used in Biredjik also, viz: Calling the men suddenly, imprisoning them and then sending them to another point nominally, but really killing them on route, and then sending away their women and children as refugees."

The few living survivors among the boys rescued by Rev. Merrill in 1915 are now elderly men in their nineties. Many others remember Rev. Merrill as President of Aleppo College in the 1920's and 1930's. Some of them have written about their memories of those times and of Rev. Merrill. The following narratives are a selection from those memories:

"Dr. Merrill felt that those who were powerless to interfere should at least bear witness, and that those who could interfere should do so. He started to interfere by bribing Turkish officials to save Armenians. He saved 150 students and orphans at Central Turkey College which, as American property, no Turkish force was to enter unless with his permis-

sion. When USA entered the war, he borrowed Turkish paper pounds and promised to pay in gold at the end of the war, and he did it. No Armenian ever did so much and spent as much as he did to save Armenians. He never talked about what he did during the war. His advice to us was to love our past heritage."

"Dr. Merrill, realizing that the foreign Embassies could not divert the Ottoman Government from its evil intentions, decided to use all possible means available to him to save the refugees. He had the Armenian orphanage transferred into the premises of Central Turkey College. Mrs. Merrill, disguised as an Armenian woman, twice or three times per week, her pocket full of change, would visit the poor and the refugees, and give them financial aid. This money was produced through boxes placed in the Armenian shops still functioning. When the amount in the box reached five gold pounds, Sarkis Balabanian, a student at Central Turkey College, used to take it over to the College. While transporting a box, he was caught, imprisoned, but later saved by an Arab officer. The contents of the box, change amounting to five gold pounds, was replaced by paper pounds. Most probably, after this incident, Mrs. Merrill passed the work of saving the refugees to Armenian women. One lived in our quarter; through friendship with the family of the mukhtar of this quarter, she got information about the dates for inspections in the quarter. On these days the refugees in hiding were moved elsewhere, leaving the rooms dirty and dusty; in this way quite a few refugees were saved."

Prof. H. Kalayan

"Dr. Merrill describes the function of bribes in saving people. There is the trouble to the orphanage, so he takes the precaution of taking the orphanage into the compound of Central Turkey College, into American property, to save 150 or more orphans, and the bribe is taken as a practice to save the Armenians, in the absence of other powerful ways of saving people."

Ara Sarafian

"In Armenian circles there was a saying that when a Turkish policeman asked a missionary if he was hiding an Armenian in his house, the missionary looked in the sleeves of his coat, and answered, 'there is no one here.' The missionaries were protecting so many Armenians that giving a true answer to an unrelated question was a good way to protect these suffering people."

Norman Shanlin

"Dr. Merrill and others describe how the fathers were deported and on the way killed, and the families, mothers with their children, were deported. Just after the first world war, there was a generation of children with mothers as mother

and father. These mothers did their best to educate their children and feed them, and many of them served the nation in this way."

Ara Sarafian

"There were two Americans, Riggs in Beirut and Merrill in Aleppo, who had some influence in decisions made by the Middle East Armenian Protestant Churches Union. Riggs' influence prevailed. His point of view was assimilation with other Protestant communities, Merrill believed in being an Armenian. Riggs' point of view was of the days when immigrants to the USA were urged to change names to appear less foreign. The present idea is that of Merrill's, be with your roots."

Prof. H. Kalayan

"One is inclined to think that it was arranged [by providence] to have them [American missionaries] present in Turkey, so that they might report to the American Embassy the treatment that the Ottoman Empire was executing to finish with the Armenian nation. We are indebted to their reports to document the genocide that was practiced. As survivors, it is our responsibility to erect a memorial in Washington for all persons who have reported the atrocities done to the Armenian population as a whole. Saying to them, thank you for the trouble you have taken as a witness to the Armenian genocide."

Ara Sarafian

"Dr. Merrill's name used to be mentioned often at our home for one reason or another, always with affection and respect. Also my father and Dr. Merrill had worked in relief work in Aintab (during the Turkish massacre of Armenians). They had been accused of being spies. Unable to do much with Dr. Merrill, my father had been arrested and court-martialed to be hanged. However, by the grace of God, at the last session, my father was able to convince the court that Dr. Merrill was a man of God, doing only good, by helping the destitute people, Armenian and Turk alike. The execution was stayed. I vaguely remember that some folks went to the jail and brought him home."

Norman Shanlin

These are but a few of the comments about Dr. John Merrill, a true Christian and a true hero, during those terrible days when the Turkish authorities unleashed their genocide against the Armenian people.

Many of the Armenians who escaped the massacres took refuge in Aleppo, Syria, expanding the Armenian community in that city. In 1921, an Armenian Evangelical School was founded, which in time evolved into Aleppo College. Whatever could be salvaged from Central Turkey College in Aintab,

such as books and equipment, had been brought to Aleppo by the American missionaries. In 1924 Dr. Merrill was asked to take over the school's direction. He did so, and quickly organized the school into a leading educational facility. He introduced a printing press, the first output of which was his own translation of the Gospel of John from the original Greek to vernacular Armenian. He also established an athletic program and personally led daily prayer meetings. His influence led a number of his students to follow the pastoral profession and eventually to serve in Armenian communities both in the Old World and the New.

The following comments by some of his former students reflect the admiration he generated and the influence he had on shaping their lives and careers:

"With absolute honesty I declare that, I, in my lifetime, have never met a person who is more sympathetic and multi-dimensional as Dr. Merrill."

"Truly, Dr. Merrill was a missionary prophet when others were mere missionaries. Prophet not in the sense that he foretold the future, but in the sense that he was able to correctly analyze current situations and to honestly declare God's will."

"Dr. Merrill's individuality was the whole of his essence. He had a mystic or prophetic quality that commanded respect, even from his peers."

"To find the secret of this great man's respect-commanding qualities, one must look not only at his physical demeanor, but also look into his inner person, which had equal, if not greater, qualities and virtues that set him apart from his circle of friends, acquaintances and colleagues."

"We Armenians should be proud and grateful that our children were born and raised during that period of the Armenian Evangelical Movement which was under the influence of the teachings of a model Christian in the person of Dr. Merrill."

Rev. Assadour Sadakian

"He inspired his students and tried to help them in many ways to appreciate their heritage as Armenians. He was a man who expected discipline from his students. He was a great man and his memory must be kept high with respect and gratitude for generations to come."

"When we were driven out of Aintab in 1921-22, with people from the other parts of Cilicia, we settled in Aleppo. I enrolled as a student in the Armenian Evangelical School in 1923. The School was in a primitive situation. In 1924 Dr. Merrill and his wife came to Aleppo from U.S.A. He took over the management and moved the school to new premises in a mostly Christian quarter of Aleppo. He reorganized the school on the same principles as the Central Turkey College. His aim was to revive the community, and educate the young, with the purpose of preparing them to serve their people."

Dr. Merrill was a person of high ideals and a great educator."

Vahram Babikian, M.D.

"In addition to his duties at the High School as president, Dr. Merrill took an active role among the members of the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church. Every Sunday morning, before the church service, he led the Bible study class for the Turkish speaking seniors. My uncle, who was in the same class, told us that Dr. Merrill's answers to the most difficult questions were amazing and enlightening. Mrs. Merrill, each Sunday afternoon, rendered great service to the girls' Christian Endeavor group. The resourcefulness of both Dr. Merrill and Mrs. Merrill were highly appreciated by the Armenian Evangelical Community."

"My memories go back to 1926-1929, during the happy days of high school. Dr. Merrill was our president. He was a highly educated and experienced administrator and a teacher at the same time. We enjoyed his teachings in history and the Bible. His favorite book in the Bible was Acts. How he eagerly and fully used to explain apostle Paul's achievements in his Christian mission."

"Dr. Merrill's inspiring fifteen-minute talks at the Chapel Service, as I remember, about 'Obedience, truthfulness and sharing your blessings with others' among other subjects, made an indelible impression on the listener. Furthermore, his way of Christian life was an example for everybody and in particular for those students who had the intention to become pastors. He was extremely happy seeing this movement among several students. He encouraged them and organized Bible study classes."

Haroutune Nazarian, D.D.S.

"The first time I saw Dr. Merrill in person was when he returned to the Middle East. In 1924 he came to Aleppo to organize the school which came to be known as Aleppo College. As a youngster of 12, I saw this handsome, slim, and tall man, exuberating the aura of gentleness and kindness. I had similar impressions of just a couple of saintly Armenian pastors, but he excelled them both."

"Later I had the privilege of learning in his classes and from his teachings. He used to have general assemblies of teaching sessions on manners — how to hold spoons and bowls when drinking soup, etc. — and ethics. One thing I remember and practice to this day, is: on the way out, to leave doors, at any office or house, in the condition they were .. closed or open .. on the way in, unless one knows definitely they should be otherwise. In conversation he would not hesitate to correct one's English. He wanted the students to speak correct English."

Norman Shanlin
AMAA NEWS - 5

WE HAVE MOVED . . .

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) has moved to its New Headquarters.

The AMAA's New Address is:

**31 WEST CENTURY ROAD
PARAMUS, NJ 07652
U. S. A.**



Telephone and fax numbers, as well as e-mail address are the same:

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The remnants of the Armenian Evangelical community of Cilicia had resettled in a region (Aleppo) that was part of the mission field of the Presbyterian Church. There were informal talks of uniting the two communities [Arab and Armenian Evangelicals]. Dr. Merrill, while President of Central Turkey College, had pledged to educate the Armenian community to a point where they would be able to take over the direction of the College themselves. He could not now support the idea of this proposed union because it would no longer be a strictly Armenian institution.

In 1936 this matter was raised at the Annual Meeting of Armenian Evangelical Churches of the Middle East. Dr. Merrill was against a union because he felt the College could better serve the Armenian community as an Armenian institution rather than as a mixed entity comprised of Armenians and non-Armenians. It was decided, however, to form a union.

Dr. Merrill, ever a man of principle, did not feel he should direct an enterprise about which he had serious reservations. He therefore resigned his position so that a person committed to the idea of a union could take over its direction.

Prof. H. Kalayan

Rev. Mihran Koeroghlian, one of the first students at Aleppo college, describes Dr. Merrill's later years, after his return to the United States:

Dr. and Mrs. Merrill lived ten years in Brooklyn from 1937-1947. During this time Dr. Merrill led a very active life in public relations. Brooklyn had fertile soil for the cultivation both in the religious field and in social action. He used well his talent and resources in scholarship. He got himself involved both in the service of church and the promotion

of good will in international relations.

Dr. Merrill must have been 65 years old when he left Aleppo. Ten years had elapsed after his retirement. At the age of 75 his energies and disposition alerted him that it was time for him to slow down. Mrs. Merrill too had heart problems. They felt the necessity of leaning on younger shoulders. So they moved from Brooklyn to Beacon, NY, to be close to their daughter Margaret.

Mrs. Merrill died in 1950, the effect of whose death aggravated both the body and spirit of Dr. Merrill. However, he lived ten more years after the loss of his wife. In the meantime he alternated his residence between the homes of his two daughters, Margaret Coons and Dorothy Dorman.

John Ernest Merrill, the great missionary, eminent educator, an undiscriminating humanitarian, and a wellspring of inspiration, affectionately loved and respected by both Armenian and Turkish communities, first in Aintab, then in Aleppo, and by all who got to know him at any time or place, died on September 22, 1960 at the age of 88.

Rev. Mihran M. Koeroghlian

Dr. Merrill's objectives throughout his service among Armenians was to inspire in them self-reliance and pride in their heritage. He retired in 1937 from the presidency of Aleppo College, having firmly established an institution that met his objectives.

Dr. Merrill's memory should be kept alive as an example of what it means to have Christian values and, in the face of dangers and difficulties, to live a life in harmony with those values. He merits respect and gratitude from all Armenians and deserves a place of honor in the annals of Armenian history. He was a true Christian and a true hero.□

Armenian Genocide: A Crime Against Humanity

by Salim Diab

Editor's Note: Mr. Salim Diab is a member of the Lebanese parliament. He was born in Beirut to the well-known Abdel Rahim Diab family. After receiving his elementary education in Lebanon, he attended the Seven-Oak School in England, where he completed his high school education. Subsequently, he attended Haigazian University where he was a classmate of Rev. Movses B. Janbazian, the Executive Director of AMAA. Mr. Diab graduated from Haigazian in 1970.

Mr. Diab is a successful businessman, a much-admired community leader, and a tireless advocate of disadvantaged individuals and groups. His commitment to the rebuilding of Lebanon and his efforts for a durable peace with justice in the region, has earned him the love and respect of all segments of the Lebanese society.

During the first years of my life, an Armenian woman took care of me. Mrs. Serpoohie Najarian was my nanny. It was through her lips that for the first time I heard the unfamiliar words of a language which she spoke with her relatives or to herself in her solitude.

Once I asked her what was she saying, what language was she using, and why was she often speaking to herself?

Through Mrs. Serpoohie's answer, I came to know of the history of the Armenian people and the nightmares which they were subjected to. Her stories remained with me as folk tales, which I would hear growing up as a child, until I became an adult and enrolled at Beirut's Haigazian University. It was there that the stories told by my nanny became tied to Armenia and the "Armenian Cause," as communicated by my college friends and through various Armenian publications. In my college years and later life, I became involved in defending the

"Armenian Cause," participating in many activities organized by my college friends. However, the "Armenian Cause" became more real to me as a result of my nanny's stories and her words spoken during her solitude. Her words have left a greater impression in my mind than the words of orators.

And, as if all of a sudden, this question became real to me after having visited the Palestinian refugee center of Sabra in the aftermath of the 1982 Palestinian massacres. As a result, I envisioned and was awakened to the sufferings experienced by my nanny, and I realized the anxiety and struggles experienced by my college friends. That day, I understood the terrible violence and crime committed during the Armenian Genocide, the massacres and deportations and, lastly, the denial of the whole event.

That which occurred to the Armenian people was a cruel and conscienceless act of ethnic cleansing which claimed the lives of many, just to appease the bloodthirsty passion of professional criminals.

An Exceptional Book...**ARMENIAN CHRISTIANITY**

by Aharon Sapsezian

Armenian Christianity clearly and succinctly recounts the history of Christianity among Armenians. In 143 pages, the author has managed to present, in readable English, how Christianity came to Armenia and how, over the centuries, became assimilated into Armenia's cultural heritage. The narrative is presented objectively, avoiding partisanship of polemics. As such, it is — or should be — of interest to Armenians of all religious persuasions and to non-Armenians as well. The book contains a selective bibliography and a useful index.

Armenian Christianity makes a valuable gift specially to young people.

The second and revised edition of this unique book is now available from the AMAA Book Service Program. Call (201) 265-2607 to order your copy.



Salim Diab

This act represents a gross violation of human rights, and the total denial of the right of self-determination of people.

The genocide perpetrated against the Armenian people will remain for all times and for all peoples a gruesome reminder of man's inhumanity towards man. On the other hand, the striving for freedom and peace, as well as the love for creative enterprise, in its own right, is a living memorial to a people who will never die. Their cause will not be forgotten because, in the end, victory and life belong to the righteous.□

AMAA Leaders Visit Lebanon, Turkey and Bulgaria

Armenian communities in Lebanon, Turkey and Bulgaria are facing serious pressures and problems. These pressures are particularly severe on the Armenian Evangelical communities in these countries, as they are smaller in numbers and poorer in resources.

Last January, Mr. Andrew Torigian and Rev. Movses Janbazian, President and Executive Director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), respectively, traveled to Lebanon to meet with the Central Committee of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East. Although peace has replaced civil war in Lebanon, the economic dislocations and runaway inflation caused by that prolonged conflict are still in evidence. A small proportion of Lebanon's population may have profited from the war, but the large majority are worse off than they were before.

In the course of these meetings, Mr. Torigian and Rev. Janbazian reviewed the problems and needs facing Armenian Evangelical churches, schools and other institutions in Lebanon. After the meetings, Mr. Torigian returned to the U.S., but Rev. Janbazian stayed behind

to study in greater depth the problems facing Armenian Evangelicals in Lebanon. In doing so, he met with Armenian Evangelical pastors, school boards, school principals, church representatives and leaders of Armenian Evangelical organizations and instrumentalities.

On his way back to the U.S., Rev. Janbazian stopped off in Istanbul (Turkey) and Sofia (Bulgaria) to meet with leaders of the local Armenian Evangelical communities. In both countries the Armenian Evangelical churches are struggling to overcome serious financial and organizational problems and look to the AMAA for moral and monetary support.

In the course of his three days in Istanbul, Rev. Janbazian met with leaders of the Gedik Pasha and Beyoglu churches, Mr. Krikor Agabaloglu and Mr. Hovhannes Torkomoglu. He preached at a women's prayer meeting held in a private home and attended by about 80 women, young and old. The entire service was in the Turkish lan-



AMAA Executive Director Rev. Movses B. Janbazian and President Mr. Andrew Torigian visit with HU President, Dr. John Khanjian at his office.

guage. "Similar prayer meetings are held every day in different parts of the city," Rev. Janbazian wrote in his reports, "—a practice reminiscent of the early Christian Church."

The combined attendance of the two Armenian Evangelical churches is about 100. According to Rev. Janbazian, "the sanctuaries of both Beyoglu and Gedik Pasha churches are beautiful old structures which have not been well maintained. They were recently painted but both need extensive repair work. Both congregations need the prayers and fellowship of their sister churches in other countries." Rev. Janbazian pointed out that the Beyoglu church needs to have a heating system installed, as they now use butane gas heaters — a highly dangerous alternative. "These churches," wrote Rev. Janbazian, "represent the humble presence and feeble but faithful witness of the Armenian Evangelical church in the very cradle in which it was born. They are the last living roots that connect us with our origins."

Rev. Janbazian's other stop on his way home was in Sofia, Bulgaria, where he met with the leaders of the four Armenian Evangelical Churches in Bulgaria: Rev. Sarkis Paravazian of Sofia, Sister Josephine Keshishian of



AMAA leaders with the members of UAECNE Central Committee in Beirut.



Leaders of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in Bulgaria (above). A women's prayer meeting held in a private home in Istanbul.

Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Giragosian In Toronto

Mr. Samuel Giragosian is the AMAA Representative in Vanatzor, Armenia. Recently, he and his wife, Narine, visited Toronto, Canada, for a series of treatments for Narine's eye. While in Toronto, the Giragosians were hosted by Mr. & Mrs. Mihran & Vartouhie Jizmejian.

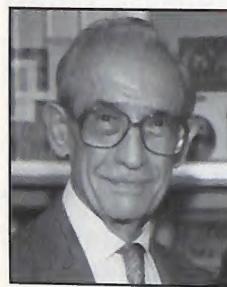
Pictured at right is Mr. & Mrs. Samuel & Narine Giragosian at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Mihran and Vartouhie Jizmejian.



Plovdiv, and Rev. Bedros Altunian of Varna and Brother Yervant Kazasian of Russe. Together, they reviewed the work and needs of the local churches, fellowships and communities. Bulgaria's economy is in disarray, with rampant unemployment, low wages and reductions in social services. The AMAA provides financial assistance to the Armenian Evangelical churches in Bulgaria, but the needs are many and urgent. They need Bibles, children's Christian literature, communion sets, audiovisual materials, visiting pastors and, for two of the churches, resident pastors. "The leaders of our churches in Bulgaria are limited in experience and training," wrote Rev. Janbazian. "However, they are serving our churches with zeal, enthusiasm and faithfulness. They deserve our prayers, active fellowship and practical support."

Rev. Janbazian concluded his report with the following words: "I pray that God will give us the wisdom, willingness and ability to respond to the challenges and opportunities for an effective Armenian Evangelical mission ministry in Turkey and Bulgaria. May He use us in greater measure to strengthen the life and work of our Evangelical Churches in those countries." □

Rev. Dr. Chopourian Honored



Rev. Dr. Giragos Chopourian and the other clergy founders of the Armenian Inter-Communal Committee (AICC) of Philadelphia were honored during this year's Vartanantz commemoration in Philadelphia, PA, held on February 19, 1988, at the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church. It was in 1963 that Rev. Chopourian spearheaded the establishment of AICC with the cooperation of the pastors of the local Armenian Evangelical, Catholic and Apostolic Churches, namely, Rev. Zaven Arzoumanian of the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Arsen Hagopian of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church, Msgr. Stepan Stepanian (deceased) of St. Mark's Armenian Catholic Church, and Archbishop Papken Varjabedian of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church. AICC is the sponsoring body of joint Vartanantz celebrations in Philadelphia.

Rev. Jirair Sogomian introduced Honoree Rev. Dr. Chopourian, citing him as the catalyst for the Armenian Inter-Communal concept. Quoting from Psalm 133, "How good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity", Rev. Sogomian saluted Dr.

Chopourian for his courage in putting into action his vision of unity because "that's the way God intended us to be." Rev. Sogomian closed his remarks with the presentation of a commemorative plaque. Dr. Chopourian expressed thanks and acknowledged the role of Archbishop Papken, whose cooperation, he averred, was key to the joining of the five churches.

Rev. Sam Agulian Installed as Pastor of AMC

In a service which featured representatives of the greater Boston Christian community and representatives from every denomination of the Armenian churches, Rev. Samuel Agulian was installed as the new pastor of the Armenian Memorial Church (AMC) of Watertown on Sunday, October 19, 1997. The service was conducted under the auspices of the Metropolitan Boston Association of the UCC with the participation of the AEUNA. A large congregation of Church members and friends attended the service. A joyous reception in honor of Rev. & Mrs. Agulian followed.

Rev. Agulian assumed his duties at the AMC in September, 1997. He has previously served in the Armenian Cilicia Cong'l Church of Pasadena and the Armenian Evang'l Fellowship of Glendale, CA.

Rev. Agulian, his wife Houri (formerly Khachigian) and five-year-old daughter, Nyree, have established residency in the church parsonage in Belmont.□

ENDOWMENT FUNDS INADVERTENTLY OMITTED IN ANNUAL REPORT

Due to a computer error, the following Endowment Funds were inadvertently omitted in the AMAA Annual Report for 1996-97. The AMAA management sincerely regrets and apologizes for the omission.

AMAA General Endowment Funds (\$1,000 & over as of 7/31/97)

Abdulian, Vahe	\$43,899
Akulian, Mr. & Mrs. Jack	34,957
Anonymous LK	50,000
Azadian, Vahan & Grace	34,027
Bakmazian, Param & Selma	61,460
Bedikian Theological, Rev. Antranig A.	26,067
Berberian, Dr. Dicran & Mrs. Armenouhi	37,705
Bezirganian, Dr. & Mrs. George	40,000
Boyajian, Avedis & Khatoun	53,309
Darakjian, Albert & Annabelle	35,850
Darakjian, Nazareth & Annie	36,824
Davidian Memorial, James A.	43,560
Dohanian Family, Hagop and Esther	45,394
Galoostian, Flora and Diane	45,000
Hagopian, Bedros & Yeranouhi	36,250
Hancock, Angele Bedrossian	35,666
Harpootlian, Charles & Esther	35,533
Hovnanian Memorial, Dr. Phillip & Lydia	44,100
Iskenderian Memorial, Dr. Haig, Nevart & Yerchanik .	44,075
Iskiyan Theological, Paul & Arousiag	41,150
Jameson Family Fund, James G.	61,402
Jedidian Educational, Martha Dodo	61,347
Kalagian Memorial, Kaloosd, Zabel & Alice	54,977
Karamanoukian, Ohannes & Araxie	53,992
Karian, Dr. & Mrs. Edward	56,537
Kasparian Scholarship #4, Alice Odian	40,000
Keuhnelian, Mr. & Mrs. Garabed H.	33,774
Merjanian, Vosgeperan & Josephine	35,235
Nahigian, Raymond & Marie	41,428
Nedourian Memorial, Dikranouhie	54,217
Nourkhanian Mem'l, Alice	50,000
Ouzounian, Mr. & Mrs. Mike	60,720
Piranian, Simon & Louisa	185,000
Poloshian Memorial, Narthooe Nahigian	14,000
Salibian, Mr. & Mrs. Hrag	35,165
Salverian, Leon & Arshalouyse	48,452
Saprichian, Altoon & Sara	50,000
Segel, Mr. & Mrs. David	35,650
Sevoyan, Charles	50,000
Sourenian Mem'l, Lucy	63,470
Tourian, Mr. & Mrs. Levon H.	33,678
Tufenkian Memorial, Richard	51,000
Uligian, Mr. & Mrs. Charles	58,960
Vartanian, Michael M. & Lily Aghavni	14,263
Zeron, Mrs. Bydzar	50,300

Haigazian University (\$1,000 & over as of 7/31/97)

Belian, Aram Y.	38,400
Kurkjian Memorial, Louis & Mary	55,740
Morott Mem'l, Agnes	63,102
Peters Memorial, Leon S.	62,180
Sourenian Memorial, Shavharsh & Lucy	63,469

Kitchen Encounter

by H. Ronnie Henesian

Editor's Note: Mrs. H. Ronnie Henesian is a founding member and a generous supporter of Friends of AMAA-Peninsula Group. Ronnie and her husband, Aram Henesian, are also active members of the St. Andrew Armenian Apostolic Church of Cupertino, CA. Mr. & Mrs. Henesian have played a key role in the establishment of the parish, and in the construction of the beautiful sanctuary of St. Andrew Church. The following testimony by Ronnie demonstrates the Christian love and the genuine Armenian spirit with which she has always related to, and served all Armenians regardless of their religious, social or political backgrounds.



Last week, as I was washing the pots after Sunday's coffee hour at church, a gentleman walked into the kitchen with what appeared to be an urgent request. I listened to him for a few seconds, understanding not one single word. The quizzical look on my face quickly brought a cessation to our one-sided conversation. We both smiled and he began once again.

This time, knowing what I was up against, I gave him my undivided attention, listening carefully to his every word.

I had heard Eastern Armenian before and had been able to understand key words. However, this man's dialect left no room for my comprehension. We laughed at one another's bewilderment. He, probably thinking, "what kind of an Armenian is this woman...she cannot understand me." And I thinking, "why can't I understand this man. I know he's speaking Armenian." Fortunately, another parishioner, well-versed in his dialect, translated and I was able to fulfill his request.

In 1605, the ancestors of this man had been forced by Persia's Shah-Abbas to emigrate to his new capital, Isfahan, and settle there as unwilling colonists, whereas mine had remained in ancient historic Armenia, dealing with a different enemy. Here we are, 389 years later in an Armenian Church kitchen on the other side of the world. He cannot understand my words...nor I, his.

But he knows in his heart that he has found a new home in our St. Andrew Church community in Cupertino, California, and he feels a warm welcome here. Our shared Christian beliefs and for which our forefathers had fought, our common history and our differences, point out that our commonalities far exceed our differences. The very breath of Vartan surges through the soul of each and every one of us, attesting to the fact that there are no strangers in an Armenian Church anywhere in the world...only newfound brothers and sisters.□

AMAA Representatives in Washington, D.C.



From left, Rev. Dr. Giragos Chopourian, Mr. Andrew Torigian, Mr. Albert Momjian and Mr. Charles DeMirjian.

An AMAA delegation recently paid a courtesy visit to Republic of Armenia Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Rouben Shugarian. The delegation was led by Mr. Albert Momjian, and included Rev. Dr. Giragos Chopourian, Mr. Andrew Torigian and Mr. Charles DeMirjian. After their cordial meeting with Ambassador Shugarian, the AMAA representatives also visited the White House, where Mr. Set Momjian personally accompanied them in a special tour of the executive mansion of the President of the United States.□

Obituaries

Hrair Balikian

Dr. Hrair Balikian was born on March 18, 1934, in Aleppo, Syria, to Mihran and Lucy Balikian. He was a graduate of Aleppo College, and of the School of Medicine of the American University of Beirut at the age of 24. In 1958 he began his medical internship at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, and completed his residency with a two-year fellowship at Emory University, also in Atlanta.

Dr. Babikian went into research and teaching at the Medical School of Emory University after completing a tour of duty in the United States Army as a medical doctor in Korea and Tacoma, Washington. In 1971 he moved to Los Angeles, where the rest of his family was living, and practiced internal medicine at the Veterans Hospital in Sylmar. Shortly after, he joined Kaiser Hospital in West Los Angeles and served there with devotion and excellence until his untimely death on January 5, 1997.

Hrair was everything a pharisee was not - very private, humble, self-effacing, honest, never allowing gossip or negative comments about anyone, genuinely caring and ever-ready for service. He abstained from religious exhibitionism; yet he was a man of deep faith in God. He was also a loyal member of the Armenian Evangelical Church (UACC).

Hrair married Angele, a lovely nurse at Kaiser, in 1979. The birth of Tamar in 1980 fulfilled their joy and happiness until tragedy struck one day when Hrair was diagnosed with a malignancy that did not respond to months of treatment.

During this time, Hrair prepared to die. He was more concerned about Angele and Tamar than about his debilitating illness. Though weak and often in pain, he mustered all his strength to lead as normal a life as a child of God could. He kept his faith, and was at peace with himself, his family and with God. His glowing smile endured to the end.

John Haig Serrajian

John Haig Serrajian, 80, went home to be with his Lord on May 17, 1997, in Cleveland, OH. Born January 20, 1917, in Bridgeport, CT, he was the third child of the late Hovanness and late Haiganoush Serrajian, members of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit.

Mr. Serrajian was a pharmacist who had lived in the Cleveland area for most of his adult life. He was a graduate of Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, and was married to the late Nuvere K. Minasian of Cleveland, OH. He worked for Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical Company, the City of Cleveland, various hospitals and private pharmacies, and at the age of 80, was still active as a part-time pharma-

cist. As a veteran of World War II, Mr. Serrajian, a Captain in the Army Air Corps, served in the Pacific Theater, where he was assigned to Okinawa, Japan, as part of the United States military occupation of that country at the conclusion of the war. Honorable discharged from the military, John Serrajian returned home to his wife and young daughter, and continued his college studies which had been interrupted by the war. Throughout his life, Mr. Serrajian never failed in his efforts to serve his fellow human beings. He was known for his unselfish devotion and kindness to others.

Survivors include his daughters and their families, Nevaire and husband Barry Rich (Arlington, VA); Laurel and husband Robert Shamakian; and grandchildren, Mara and Dylan Shamakian (Mayfield Heights, OH).

Isaac Shadarevian

Isaac Shadarevian was born to Christian parents in Marash, Turkey, on February 6, 1911. In 1929, at the age of 18, he emigrated to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he became an active member of the local Armenian Evangelical Congregational Church. He served the church as a member of the Church Council as well as a Sunday School teacher, teaching the Bible in the Armenian language. He married Elisa Manoukian in 1944.

Mr. Shadarevian was one of the founding members of the Argentina District Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). He served the AMAA Argentina as an active member and as a capable secretary.

Mr. Shadarevian was a true Christian. His life was an example of righteousness for his two children and five grandchildren. His life, work and relationships radiated the spirit of the following Biblical verse which he quoted frequently: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on those things." (Phillipians 4: 8).

Mr. Shadarevian went to be with the Lord on July 14, 1997.

Toros Hagop Shamlian

Toros Shamlian was born in Marash, Turkey on August 12, 1907, to Hagop and Hranoush (nee Nalbandian) Shamlian. The family attended the First Armenian Congregational Church in Marash. The impact of a Christian home life had a great influence on Toros. Especially in his later years, he was always quick to proclaim his love for the Lord and he especially loved to sing his favorite hymns of praise.

As a boy, Toros attended the Berjshalam Boys School in Marash which was run by German missionaries.

In Marash, the government's efforts culminated in 1919 in a siege that left the Shamlian family and all their neighbors trapped in their homes for 9 days. On the eve of the 10th day, they escaped to the French Catholic mission.

In 1922, his father was able to bring the family out of Marash to Aleppo, Syria. Toros was able to resume his education at the American High School and at the American University of Beirut, from where he graduated with a degree in civil engineering. After graduation he found a job with a foreign engineering firm in Mosul.

Toros married Arpine in 1937, in Aleppo, Syria and returned to Iraq where he resumed his work as an engineer. In 1941 he and his wife emigrated to the United States and settled in San Francisco. Toros and Arpine were blessed with two daughters, Linda in 1942 and Brenda in 1944. In 1968, Arpine died suddenly. In 1973, Toros married Rosine Tabakian.

In his personal life, he served the Calvary Armenian Congregation Church as a council member and was named "Deacon for Life" for his many years of service in that capacity.

Annie (Boyajian) Goergizian

Mrs. Annie (Boyajian) Goergizian went to be with her Lord on Nov. 21, 1997, in Providence, RI, twenty years after the death of her husband, Rev. Arsen Goergizian. Her devotion to her husband enabled him to concentrate on his pastoral duties and on writing several published and unpublished books on Armenian history.

Annie worked and lived frugally in order to complement her husband's salary and to assist in his publications. Her help was notable when her husband, with the leaders of the church, ran a campaign to raise funds necessary for the purchase of the present church edifice in 1968.

They worked very hard and created such enthusiasm that, among many anecdotes, there is one about a college student borrowing \$1,000.00 from a bank to contribute to the building fund.

Her faith in God was immutable, and her sense of philanthropy towards the needs of Armenian victims everywhere was amazing for a lady of such modest means, who deprived herself and descended to a near poverty level in order to better assist in the work of the

AMAA. Besides many small gifts, she established a \$50,000.00 endowment fund with the AMAA.

She is survived by two sisters. Two brothers and two other sisters have passed away before her.

For the past ten years, throughout her old age and sickness, while at home or in the nursing home, Araxie and Vartan Bologan looked after her, helping her, nursing her and providing this childless grand lady with a family atmosphere.

Besides the AMAA, she remained faithful to the AGBU and the Knights of Vartan to the end, as her late husband had been before her. Blessed be their memories.

Hovhannes Yacoubian

Hovhannes Yacoubian passed away on December 3, 1997, in Aleppo, Syria.

Hovhannes was the beloved son of Nouri and Aznive Yacoubian, being their first born.

By profession Hovhannes was a designer/dressmaker. He took great pride in his work. Having studied in Paris, he had mastered the art of clothing design. His artistic nature was manifest in his work throughout his life.

Being the first child had its advantages and disadvantages. He enjoyed the love and affection of his parents, yet upon the death of his father, the responsibilities of taking care of the family fell entirely upon his shoulders. Instantaneously, he became the father figure and the provider. Although he was an authority figure, he was always very caring toward his younger siblings and attentive to their needs. As the years progressed, he assumed the full responsibility of our home.

Life was hard for Hovhannes during his last four years. He suffered from a stroke which affected his speech and the mobility of his right hand. In his eyes and by his standards, these were imperfections. It was impossible for Hovhannes to accept these disabilities. However, God had other plans for him. His suffering ended on December 3rd, 1997.

Gasper Magarian

Gasper Magarian passed away on December 28, 1997. At the age of 98, Gasper was the oldest practicing attorney in the state of California, and was honored repeatedly by the legal and judicial profession, by various organizations and government leaders. For decades

George Ardashes Salverian, a family physician who extended the lives of so many, succumbed to heart failure on January 12 at the age of 73. He was the son of Levon and Estelle (nee Yardumian) Salverian and grandson of Rev. Haig and Mrs. Lucia Yardumian. Badveli Yardumian was a founding pastor of the Armenian Martyrs' Cong'l Church of Havertown, PA.

In brief flashback, following WWII army service as a medic in the European front,

George went on to pre-med studies at Defiance College in Ohio where he not only graduated with honors but won the hand of his bride-to-be, the lovely Ilah Rutledge. In 1951 George and Ilah were married and settled in Huntingdon Valley, PA, where they raised their family of five children.

George was a highly respected staff member at Abington Memorial and Holy Redeemer hospitals and a teacher-mentor in Temple University's Medical School Preceptorship program. Few people have been so uniquely gifted for a profession.

There was nothing half-hearted about George. He was a man of many dimensions, strong convictions and lively pursuits, including classical music, fine art, and, particularly, photography. Had medicine not been his calling, George would have made his mark as an artist-photographer. Only this past fall, a life-time retrospective of his work was exhibited at the Swedenborg Library, Bryn Athyn College. In reality, this exhibit was an autobiography - a clear, graphic testimony of George's love for humanity and, above all, for his family.

He is survived by his beloved wife Ilah, children Mark, Jeffrey, David, Hali, and Marilyn, three children-in-law, seven grandchildren, brother Haig Salverian and sisters Marian Spence and Betty Kraynik.

The AMAA Board of Directors extend their heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased through the medium of the AMAA News.

- * Astarjian, Armen Krikor
Lynfield, MA
- * Bazmajian, Arusyaks
Fresno, CA
- * Dasho, John
Lexington, MA
- * Kevorkian, Sara
South Gate, CA
- * Chiljian Rodney
Fresno, CA
- * Salverian, George
Huntingdon Valley, PA
- * Brooks, Florence
Arlington, VA
- * Cherian, Peter
Newport Beach, CA
- * Elia, Vickie
Fresno, CA
- * Mouradian, Haverj
Glebdale, CA
- * Sedrakian, Teresa
Sanger, CA
- * Tutunjian, Ann
Watertown, MA
- * Vajibian, Gousine
* Karadarian, Sandra

* Memorials designated for AMAA.

Biennial Convention
of the
Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (14th)
Armenian Evangelical Adult Fellowship (5th)
Armenian Evangelical Youth Fellowship (11th)



Date
June 25-28, 1998

Theme
"Enlarge the Place of Your Tent"

Featured Speaker
Rev. Dr. Kenneth Bailey

Host
Armenian Evangelical Church of Montreal
Rev. Mher Khachigian, Pastor

Convention Site
Hotel Sheraton, Laval, Quebec

For Registration Information Call or Write to:
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